

July 9, 2004

**IT WILL COST MORE NOT TO CO - SPONSOR
H.R. 4595
"THE RONALD REAGAN ALZHEIMER'S
BREAKTHROUGH ACT OF 2004"**

Dear Colleague:

September 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed the first proclamation designating November of that year "National Alzheimer's Awareness Month". In 1984 President Reagan signed the bill that authorized the National Institute on Aging to fund the Alzheimer's Disease Centers. A decade later, this vigorous President we all remember again helped to raise awareness about Alzheimer's Disease when he wrote his courageous letter to the American public revealing that he was on the long road away from those he loved.

In just the last decade leading up to the death of President Reagan, research has made tremendous progress in understanding Alzheimer's disease. Researchers have provided us with improved diagnostic tools that are helping providers diagnose Alzheimer's earlier with more than 90 percent accuracy. Identification of potential points of therapeutic intervention has accelerated the search for new treatments and additional strategies for slowing the progression of the disease process. Today it is possible to slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease- there is hope soon to postpone the onset of Alzheimer's disease and hopefully in the foreseeable future it will be possible to prevent full-blown Alzheimer's disease. The race for a cure is on but we are not there, yet.

Today, while Alzheimer's patients represent less than 13 percent of the 65-and-over population, Medicare beneficiaries with Alzheimer's or dementia account for more than one-third of all Medicare spending. This is because 95 percent of Medicare beneficiaries who suffer from Alzheimer's or another form of dementia also have other chronic conditions – such as heart disease, diabetes, or pulmonary disease – that are worsened by the onset of Alzheimer's.

If we are unable to delay the onset of Alzheimer's or slow its progression, **annual Medicare costs for these patients alone are estimated to escalate to nearly \$300 million in 2025, and to over \$1 trillion by 2050.** This catastrophic impact will ripple throughout the health system, including **Medicaid, whose Alzheimer's-specific costs could increase from an estimated \$19 billion in 2000 to \$32 billion by 2025 to \$118 billion in 2050.**

Attached to this Dear Colleague for your review is a copy of The Lewin Group report that was commissioned by the Alzheimer's Association. Released on June 23, 2004 the report

states that if we don't increase our spending to find a cure that the cost of treating people with Alzheimer's disease will break the bank for Medicare and Medicaid. Increasing our research funding by \$330 millions today will, by the year 2015, save the American people \$13 in Alzheimer's health care cost for every dollar we invest now. These savings could amount to \$51 billion by 2015, 100 to 1 saving by the year 2050. But without this help the cost will increase because of our expanding at risk population.

We can accomplish this goal, with your support of **HR4595 " the Ronald Reagan Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2004 "**. This comprehensive legislation will authorize a doubling of the National Institute of Health's budget for Alzheimer's research from about \$700 million to \$1.4 billion. It will also increase funding for a number of other important programs that help aid patients and support caregivers and educate. Lastly, HR 4595 contains a \$ 3,000 tax credit to help caregivers who provide home-based assistance to a loved one in their own home.

To enhance your understanding of Alzheimer's disease you should have received an invitation to a briefing on July 13 at 9:30 in Canon House Office Building Room 334. There will be a panel discussion on Alzheimer's disease that will focus on new treatments in the pipeline and how the federal Government can assist in reducing their time to market.

Through the Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease, we are leading efforts to move H.R. 4595 forward. If you would like to join this movement by becoming a cosponsor, or if you want to learn more about the work of the task force, please contact either Dr. Michael Bailey in Rep. Ed Markey's office at 225-2836 or Nick Manetto in Rep. Chris Smith's office at 225-3765.

Sincerely,

Edward Markey
Member of Congress
Co-Chair

Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress
Co-Chair